



Visiting Scholar Speaker Series

Dominic Tierney
Mershon Center

**"Essence of Victory: Winning and Losing
International Crises"**

Click above to listen to an audio recording of this lecture.

*Perceptions of victory and defeat in international crises, regardless of the reality, can make or break political careers, destroy or solidify alliances, and produce a distribution of praise and blame that endures long into the future. On the face of it, evaluating the winning and losing states in crises often seems a straightforward question – winning results from achieving one's aims and gaining tangible benefits in the final settlement or outcome. This talk will argue, however, that people's beliefs about which country has won or lost can be influenced as much by perceptions and misperceptions of the crisis, as they are by the actual reality of the final outcome. The talk, based on a forthcoming article in *Security Studies*, will focus on how evaluations of which side had won and lost the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis were distorted by a triad of influences: prior biases; the particular evolution of the crisis itself; and the deliberate manipulation of opinion. The talk will show how this new framework of understanding victory and defeat can be applied to perceptions of a number of other crises and wars, including the 1968 Tet offensive, the 1973 Yom Kippur war, and the recurrent crises with North Korea since the early 1990s. Understanding these sources of bias is vital for policy-makers who wish to hold on to power during and after crises, and for the public and media, if they are to hold their leaders accountable.*

Tuesday, December 2, 2003
12:00 p.m. *
Mershon Center
Room 120



Dominic Tierney's research at the Mershon Center focuses on the evolution of U.S. intervention in foreign civil wars since 1945, examining the relationship between the strategic and humanitarian motives for intervention in the Cold War and post-Cold War international environments. Tierney recently received his Ph.D. from Oxford University in international relations, his thesis being entitled: 'F.D.R. and the Last Great Cause: U.S. Foreign Policy and the Spanish Civil War, 1936-1939'. This first-ever study of President Roosevelt and the Spanish Civil War analyses F.D.R.'s changing perceptions of what the conflict in Spain represented and the relationship between these changing perceptions and the President's policy preferences.

Initially a strong supporter of international non-intervention in Spain, Roosevelt radically changed his views due to fascist support for Franco, wider German and Italian aggression in Europe, and fears that the Spanish Civil War could become a model for fascist penetration of Latin America. In 1938 Roosevelt attempted, belatedly and unsuccessfully, to block the Nationalist victory in Spain. Sections of the thesis are forthcoming in the *Journal of*

Contemporary History under the title: 'F.D.R. and Covert Aid to the Loyalists in the Spanish Civil War, 1936-1939'. Dr. Tierney is also interested in perceptions of victory and defeat in international crises. His article (with Dominic Johnson) 'Essence of Victory: Winning and Losing International Crises' is forthcoming in *Security Studies*. The article uses the case of the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis to illustrate that observers' perceptions of victory and defeat in a crisis settlement can depend as much upon biased perceptions and framing effects, as upon the settlement terms themselves. In 2000-2001 Dr. Tierney was the Frank Knox Memorial Fellow at Harvard University.

*R.S.V.P. to [Viki Jones](#) if you plan to attend this event.